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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (9/19): PREDICTIONS ABOUT LIVNI
AND HAMAS NEXT STEPS

Main Stories:

Kadima elections continue to receive highlighted coverage in all dailies. Leading with the story, Al-Ayyam headlines, "[Kadima winner] Livni, the weak, embarks on the difficult job of forming a new government 'as soon as possible.'" The dailies run reports outlining a carefully-gauged official Palestinian reaction, quoting President Abbas saying that the elections are internal Israeli affairs and that the Palestinians will negotiate with whoever is chosen by Israelis. Al-Ayyam quotes PLO's Abed Rabbo saying that following her victory, Livni has to provide a "different model" and "clearer positions" than those adopted by previous Israeli governments, especially in regards to ending occupation and halting settlement activities. Other reports quote representatives from Hamas and Islamic Jihad dismissing Livni's victory as "meaningless" for the Palestinian people, and one that will only maintain the Israeli policy of aggression against Palestinians.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaynah refuting reports that any Palestinian refugees would be resettled in Jordan. In a related but separate report, the paper cites a statement issued by the PLO's Department of National and International Relations, welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's willingness to apologize for the "expulsion of the Palestinian people," noting however that such an apology, "would not be enough."

Al-Quds front-pages a report quoting President Bush that the U.S. administration will intervene in financial markets in order to restore investor confidence. The papers also run in-depth inside reports about global financial turmoil.

Al-Quds quotes a Hamas spokesman announcing that the Rafah

Gaza-Egypt crossing point will be opened on September 20, 21 to allow for the travel of students and those needing medical care, as well as those going to Mecca to perform the Omra rites.

Several front-page stories in the dailies quote South Africa's Desmond Tutu's statement that the 2006 Israeli shelling of the Gaza town of Beit Hanun, "may be a war crime." Tutu is heading up a fact-finding mission on the 2006 shelling. Leading with the story, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlights Tutu's statement that Palestinians are paying the price for Western guilt over the Holocaust.

Reports about "fierce" settler attacks being conducted against Palestinian land near the West Bank cities of Ramallah and Nablus receive highlighted coverage in Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida. In a separate article, Al-Ayyam quotes Robert Serry, UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, describing ongoing settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as "unacceptable."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. The main editorial in Al-Quds independent runs under the title "The Ramifications of Livni's Win of the Leadership of Kadima" (09/19): "Palestinians have always dealt with Israeli political developments on the basis of them being an internal issue that chiefly concern Israelis only. The Palestinian leadership has always been willing to interact... with all Israeli governments and presidents... regardless of their political affiliations... The Palestinians' welcoming [of Kadima election results has nothing to

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do with internal Israeli politics... but rather with the fact that she has headed the Israeli negotiations team and she, more than the others, is aware of where negotiations are, and what obstacles they will face. Therefore, Livni is not expected to waste a long time studying this complicated file before negotiations resume... The question now is whether or not Livni will reactivate the negotiation process that has been frozen even under her leadership of the negotiation team or will these negotiations remain stagnant, moving the region into a critical stage, as suggested by current indicators?

¶2. Columnist Samih Shbaib of Al-Ayyam independent argues under the title "What Mish'al Said" (09/10): "What Mish'al said is dangerous, extremely dangerous since it means that after January 9, Hamas will declare a void in the [office of the] presidency and eventually name the [Palestinian Authority's] Legislative Council [PLC] Chief to the position of transitional president until elections are held. Since the PLC chief is in [Israeli] detention, however, Sheikh Bahar (acting speaker of the PLC) will be named as interim president. Following this course of action, Hamas and its emirate in Gaza, will escape having any institutional or administrative ties to the institution of the presidency. In addition, the PLO will no longer be recognized by Hamas as [the representative of Palestinians]. Hamas will sever its connection with the organization (PLO) and consequently assert itself as the Palestinian reference at the Arab and international levels... It seems that Hamas scheme to separate geographically [from the West Bank] is now assuming a constitutional dimension and Hamas has chosen January 9, as D-Day for the launch of its overt scheming!"

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